Mat-Su Monitor
November 2013

Student government... did you know?

By Denise Reeve

Welcome new students, faculty, and staff to Mat-Su College! As a senator with MSC Student Government Council (MSC SGC), I offer fall greetings. MSC SGC is a student-run, student-focused government council that offers opportunities to improve campus life here in the Mat-Su Valley. These opportunities are available to all faculty, staff, and students.

Faculty and Staff: would you like to be more involved in Campus Life? There are roles available to mentor/advise student initiated clubs, groups, and events.

Students: do you have ideas for a new group, club, or event you would like to see on our campus? MSC SGC is here to help you make these happen. Our local student government actually works together to accomplish amazing things on campus.

So how does one learn more about MSC SGC? We meet each week in FSM 105 from 11:50 am to 12:50 pm. Feel free to attend a meeting and see what is up! If you would like to be a guest speaker at SGC please call by Friday the week before the meeting you would like to attend. President Mike DiBattista, Vice-President Keelan Mangus, and Secretary Andrea Bennett can be reached at 907-745-9759 or in the SGC office in JKB 129.

Did you know MSC SGC sponsors clubs, groups, and events requested by students? The holidays are coming up, so we need students who are willing to create more fun here at MSC. Come one, come all to MSC SGC this fall!

Comet of the century?

By Sarah Frances Tuttle

Comet C/2012 S1 (ISON) has garnered a lot of attention lately. Discovered in September of 2012 by Russian scientists, the comet was nicknamed ISON for the International Scientific Optical Network, a group of observatories in ten countries that helped to detect, track, and monitor objects in space. Observations suggest that its nucleus is a little more than 3 miles wide. Comet ISON was quick to be noticed because it was much brighter than comets normally are for being so very far from the Sun. If this comet is so bright when it's still in the outer Solar System, it's sure to be a truly amazing sight when it gets closer to the Sun.

An important thing to know about comet ISON is that it is a new comet. Never before has this icy dirt-ball come into the inner Solar System, and never before has it been exposed to the heat of the Sun. Comet ISON, like other comets, comes from the Oort cloud far in the outer Solar System, where the Sun is a small speck, much like the other (continued on page 2)

What makes Halloween so fun?

By Melissa Austin

The carnival-like atmosphere of Halloween, with its motifs of agriculture and death, is especially enchanting for children and also appealing to adults. Why? Sure, there are all the fun activities associated with the holiday, like carving unique pumpkins and watching scary movies, but what makes it so much fun to dress up and go trick-or-treating? Children eagerly don their costumes—perhaps a superhero, a princess, or even a more traditional witch or ghost—envisioning the heavy bag of candy they will receive for their efforts. Meanwhile, parents discuss safety concerns and accompany their children on the after-dark adventure. Other adults may host or attend Halloween parties (at which it is popular for women to wear sexually provocative costumes) or simply stay home and greet trick-or-treaters with a bowl of candy.

It is not every day of the year that these types of creative expressions (continued on page 2)

Comet

Continued from page 1

stars in the night sky. It's so cold there that gases here on Earth, like hydrogen, helium, and oxygen, will be frozen as ice. As a new comet travels in towards the Sun it will heat up, and certain materials will vaporize off of it. This is what happened to comet ISON. When it was in the outer solar system the carbon dioxide and other materials that vaporize at low temperatures were heated up and left a bright trail. However, as it travels into the inner Solar System we are finding that it's not getting as bright as we originally hoped. So does this mean comet ISON will be nothing more than a dim blur?

The brightness of comets in general is notoriously difficult to predict, but new comets are almost impossible. As ISON gets closer to the Sun it will get brighter. It will be heated up more and more, and larger quantities of ices will vaporize off until it reaches its perihelion (closest point to the Sun). This is the tricky part. At its perihelion comet ISON will be so close to the Sun that the temperatures on the surface of the comet will be hot enough to melt metal. We don't know the composition of ISON's nucleus, nor its rotation, so it's possible that it could break apart or evaporate and leave nothing to show after it passes by the Sun. It could just as likely survive the pass-by and produce a wonderful, bright, beautiful sight in the early morning sky.

Comet ISON will get brighter the closer it gets to the Sun, and in October it should be visible with a small telescope or binoculars. You can find it in the constellation Leo, close to the star Regulus, and next to Mars. ISON's perihelion happens on November 28th, and this is when it will be the brightest, but its light will be obstructed by the Sun and it will be quite invisible. The best viewing dates will be in early December, from the 1st through the 17th. Earlier in the month the comet will be brighter, if it survives the pass-by with the Sun. In Mid-January comet ISON will pass near the orbit of Earth, and it is possible that it will leave a trail behind that will be viewable as a meteor shower.

All in all there are many things we don't know about how comet ISON will react in the upcoming months. That's half the fun! ISON could be the comet of the century, or be destroyed by the Sun. The world will be watching to see if this new visitor to our sector of space will sizzle or fizzle. Take part in the excitement and look up!

Halloween

Continued from page 1

and play are acceptable, much less encouraged; therein lies much of the fun we derive from the Halloween experience. The excitement achieved through various role reversals (children dressing as adult figures, women openly dressing provocatively, etc.) and the open celebration of themes related to death make apparent the encouraged inversion of certain norms on Halloween. On this one day we are "allowed" to dress the way we want, rather than feeling like we have to dress so that we will fit in with our social group. The question then shifts from "why is Halloween so fun" to "why is this sort of non-conformist fun sanctioned to one day of the year?" Why is there only one day set aside for children to parade as adults and adults to embrace what is culturally determined as taboo?

Our society's definition and perpetuation of cultural norms is thought by many to act as a functional mechanism, in that this definition of appropriate behavior serves to maintain a sense of order. Through this perspective, interestingly enough, it seems as though Halloween, the day set aside for the inversion of certain norms, has become a norm in and of itself. By establishing a day where children are encouraged to dress as adults, women are free to reveal their bodies, and the theme of death embraced, our culture is effectively communicating that these things are not appropriate in daily life, further perpetuating our collective norms. If we wish to feel truly free to dress how we want, not how we think we should, the first step is acknowledging this process of norm formation. Wouldn't it be great to know that if we wanted to, we could show up to class in the spring dressed as a zombie? The truth is, once we free our minds from the socially-defined constraints of "functionality," "fashion," and "order," we can achieve that child-like thrill of being ourselves every day of the year.

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The Joy of Letting Go – Breaking Out of the Ego Prison

By Jake Magoon

"The greatest con he ever pulled was making you believe that he is you." – Revolver (2005). The origins of this psychological structure we refer to as "I" is, as of yet, still slightly mysterious. If we look back far enough through evolutionary history, at a certain point our ancestors would not have possessed strong ego boundaries in the same way that we do today, via the simple logical fact that the human conception of self was not shared by all of our ancestors stretching back to the origin of life. Sure, we can suppose (with good reason) that they possessed awareness of their bodies and their surroundings, but what of this social organizational tool we today refer to as "the self?" In order to begin to answer these questions, it is important we understand what we're talking about—and the treasure we all have without even knowing it.

The ego, then, to put it simply, is the story, comprised of our history, experiences, and judgments, about ourselves, that we tell ourselves. As social creatures, it should come to us as no surprise that our identity—the way in which we wish to perceive ourselves—is molded and shaped by every event and experience into the fragile amalgamations of "I ams" and "I am nots" that we regard to be "us." When considered from the evolutionary perspective of the replication of useful adaptations, the idea of the ego as a social organizational tool begins to make sense: the imaginary ego, shaped as it is by the way in which we are born into social circumstances (continued on page 7)

Inheritors of world undergoing climate, economic crisis told to be more like their parents

By Jake Magoon

Waiting in line to order a Double Down sandwich, fries, and diet Coke at a local KenTacoHut, middle-aged Ralph Johnson explained what's wrong with the young people today. "The truth is, the kids these days need to step away from their YouTubes and think about what our generation did that paved the way for so much opportunity," Mr. Johnson said. "College is expensive? Enough with the begging for handouts – when I was their age, I didn't need to borrow money from hard working tax payers to go to school, all I had to do was something these kids frankly don't know anything about: get a summer job. How is it even possible to wind up with $120,000 worth of student debt any--" Mr. Johnson said, interrupted momentarily by an alarm on his watch that reminded him to take his daily pharmaceutical cocktail. Neglecting to mention the profound contributions to civil and women's rights made by his generation by refusing to do what they were told, Ralph Johnson had a message for today's youth, proclaiming with hope and encouragement, "There is so much to be excited about, stop complaining!"

Wistfully considering the state of world affairs crafted by those in charge, Mr. Johnson elaborated, saying, "Look, things aren't so bad today… for one thing, not only did we not have Nintendos and Playstations, we also didn't have approaching ecological catastrophe as a result of short-sighted massive overconsumption, how tubular is that?" Ralph said, genuinely empathizing with the kids. "You kids are always trying to go for what's exciting, well what could be more exciting than a government shutting down and threatening to crash the global financial system by defaulting on its debt in order to prevent poor people from getting health insurance?"

"Even the weather is more exciting these days than when I was young – if we hadn't kicked out that bum Carter who told us to put on a sweater in favor of an actor that knew how to lie to us the way we wanted to hear it, maybe we would have made a real project out of transitioning to a green economy the way our parents did with the Apollo program, and then you would be missing out on increasingly extreme weather events. It's just like those Mountain Dew commercials! Do the dew, bros!" Opining on the job market, Ralph said there was much to be hopeful about there as well, stating, "Think of it as the ultimate reality show competition – four people compete for every job opening. The winner lands an unpaid internship where they spend 60 hours a week combating the gnawing, soul-crushing despair that is the hallmark of our nihilistic era largely devoid of genuine human connection, and the loser either moves back in with their parents or is forced to eat Alpo."

"It's not so bad, just look at me! My high stress job might be one lower-than-expected quarterly profit report away from being downsized to the unemployment office – which, by the way, is something I earned – and sure, I might spend most of my day faking smiles, surrounded by equally stifled, terrified coworkers pretending not to think about being one medical emergency away from homelessness, with no retirement plan of which to speak, but at the end of a long, sedentary day under artificial lighting, I know I'll have enough money left over, after the gas, health insurance, mortgage, blood pressure pills, anti-depressants, and credit card bills have been paid, to stop at the grocery store on my way home and buy a box of pre-processed powdered donuts to be eaten in one sitting while watching Here Comes Honey Boo-Boo reruns."

"This world my generation has built enables us humans to live up to our true potential, and live every excitement-filled moment of life to its fullest – so please, kids, stop complaining – you have nothing to be depressed about. From austerity and economic crisis and looming ecological collapse, to global fundamentalist terror and constant government surveillance, the future has never looked so exciting. It's important that you kids try to keep things in perspective and not act so entitled all the time." At press time, Mr. Johnson received a notice on his smart phone that indicated his retirement savings were wiped out due to stock market speculation, and after briefly sobbing into his half-eaten Double Down, was seen calling up his children one by one, asking them if it would be okay if they might be included in his retirement plans.

This editorial is a work of satire, and is not to be confused with reporting of actual events, regardless of the way in which the contents of the article may have some resemblance to reality.

New on campus: Fiber Arts Club

By K. Huling

A new club has arrived on campus! The Mat-Su Fiber Arts Club has formed as a forum to provide training, and as a way to share trends in all things fiber arts. Our club is open to everyone ten years of age or older. Focus will be given to knitting, quilting, crocheting, weaving, spinning, and sewing projects made with fabric, fleece, and yarn. Weekly Thursday meetings are from 2:30-3:30 PM. Training and project sessions will be on Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm on November 8 and 22 and Dec 6. All sessions meet at Mat-Su College in JKB 108. Join our club to learn new skills. Bring your project and create while visiting with fellow fiber arts enthusiasts. For further information call 907-677-YARN (9276). We look forward to stitching and sharing yarns!

Dance Club update

By Will Scott

Welcome all to another semester of fun and torture! The Dance Club is in full swing this semester, pun intended. Our meeting times are Tuesdays, from 5 PM to 7 PM for study, and Thursdays, from 5 PM to 7 PM, for dancing. We meet in FSM 212. So far we have learned swing, salsa, and cha-cha. If you have any suggestions, please leave them on our bulletin board in the JKB building or present them in person at our meetings. We look forward to seeing you. Shall we dance?

How it works: the northern lights

By Sarah Frances Tuttle

There is hardly anything more striking and beautiful in the natural world than the Northern Lights and being in Alaska, we get to see this beautiful phenomenon all winter long. But how exactly does it happen? What causes that gorgeous light show, and why are there different colors?

In the north the lights are called Aurora Borealis. They get this name from the Roman Goddess of dawn known as Aurora, and the Greek name for the North wind, Boreas. There are also Southern Lights, which are called Aurora Australis. These lights occur close to the magnetic poles of the planet in an area called the annulus. The roughly circular annulus is approximately 1,865 miles across. However, because of the way the Sun interacts with Earth to produce the aurora the diameter of the annulus can expand or contract.

The aurora is produced when charged particles delivered by the solar winds are focused by the Earth's magnetosphere and react with elements in the thermosphere. The solar winds are naturally occurring phenomena in which the sun expels charged particles, most of which are electrons and protons. These 'winds' of charged particles are constantly 'blowing' outward from the Sun and throughout the solar system. When they get close to Earth they come in contact with our magnetosphere and most of them are deflected away from the planet. The magnetosphere is the torus-shaped outer region of the ionosphere that controls the movement of charged particles. It is a magnetic field that is generated by the electric current of the Earth, which is produced within the core as the molten metal outer core moves around the solid metal inner core of the planet. The solar winds distort the shape of the magnetosphere into a tear-drop shape. Most of the charged particles in the solar winds are deflected, but many of them are focused by the magnetosphere into the annulus region, where the magnetic lines converge on the Earth's magnetic poles. When the solar winds are weaker the annulus will retreat closer to the poles. The annulus may expand during severe solar 'storms' or during coronal mass ejections; during which the Sun expels a chunk of its photosphere.

Once the charged particles reach the thermosphere, or high altitude atmosphere, they collide with atoms of Oxygen and Nitrogen. These atoms become ionized and emit photons, or light particles, which produce the colors in the aurora. The most common color the aurora exhibits is green. This is produced from the ionization of oxygen atoms up to 150 miles in altitude. Red is also produced from the ionization of oxygen. The lesser seen blue and purple colors are caused by the ionization of nitrogen atoms and happens closer to the surface, being only up to 60 miles in altitude.

The phenomenon of the aurora is a beautiful testament to the fantastic physical properties that govern our universe and give us life on this planet. They occur on a plethora of other planets as well, including our own Jupiter and Neptune! For me, discovering the 'how' of physical phenomena has never taken away from the beauty of the thing itself. Quite to the contrary, I find that I am all the more awe-struck by the beauty of the aurora now, being aware of the incredible circumstances that are required for its existence.

Ask Sophia

Welcome to Ask Sophia, a new advice column that will appear regularly in the Mat-Su Monitor. If you have a question you'd like to see answered, email it to sophia@matsu.alaska.edu or submit it in the Ask Sophia box at the library front desk.

Q. Dear Sophia: Why do I never get asked out on a date? — *Always In*

A. Dear Always: You don't need someone else to show you a good time. Go out with friends or family, join a club, or volunteer. Once you get yourself out there you're bound to run into like-minded people. And let's not forget that first impressions can be crucial—good hygiene and a friendly smile can go a long way.

Q. Dear Sophia: Why are most men afraid of strong, confident, intelligent, good looking, happy women? — *Intimidating*

A. Dear Intimidating: I don't think it's really fair to lump all men together. Just be yourself. Do the things you enjoy doing. Congratulations on your success!

Q. Dear Sophia: Why do men think they are good looking when they are at least fifty pounds overweight, middle aged, dress sloppy, speak poorly, and have no manners, and yet women are big if they are taller than 5'6", wear over size 8, and are older than 30? — *Judged from the Outside.*

A. Dear Judged: There are plenty of fish in the sea. Sounds to me like you need to find a different pool.

Q. Dear Sophia: I love my girlfriend but have a hard time not checking out attractive women. — *Wandering Eye*

A. Dear Wandering: Be honest with yourself and your girlfriend. Looking and shopping around are not the same. As long as you and your girlfriend are on the same page (she is free to check out the scenery, too) you have nothing to worry about.

Q. Dear Sophia: I have been married for 6 years. The magic is waring [sic] off. What I mean is I think my wife got me to mary [sic] her by use of a magic spell. Before she hexes me agin [sic] and I forget I don't love her, tell me what to do. What amulets or counter-spells will protect me? — *Jeff*

A. Dear Jeff: Sounds like you need the silver streak of reality.. Let's hope there are no children in this relationship. You and your wife might want to consider professional counseling.

Mat-Su Monitor

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Want to see your name here next issue? Attend a club meeting (Mondays and Thursdays from 12-1 in library room 214) or email mdibattista@alaska.edu for information on getting involved. All students are welcome; we have roles for more than just writers.

Mat-Su College
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Mat-Su College is currently hiring!

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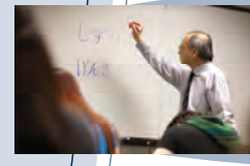

Full vacancy announcements and the online application are available at:

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Mat-Su College is a community campus of UAA and offers competitive compensation combined with excellent health care, tuition, leave, and retirement benefits.

Musings

By Sarah Frances Tuttle

I'm sick of sitting in a stasis in time
Needing something to engage my mind
Once behind, stagnation
is a death to the mind, we find
Comfort in the symmetry of poetry
but beauty, subjective as it may be
is a far cry from reality

This place 's new to me, I need to find
a better way to occupy my mind
What is reality, the meaning of time?
I find I must unravel this line
to satisfy my fervid design, and so
I run through the halls of my ego
Eager to find a path I can climb
Leading me to realization in kind

But introspection 's a lie
Unless introspection 's alive
inside, finding something to cope
In the shadows we choke as we toke
Looking for answers through smoke
But they never come, they never do
They never did, they never were
Were never meant to, be
limited to the so called truth
Only the mind can see
But the truth is, what we see
through this sea, is a seed
A tiny insignificant seam
Through which dreams bleed
We can't make sense of it all
so our egos scream, fall! Fall!
Into MY arms should you crawl!
I am right! *I AM ALL*!
But we're wrong..

This existence 's so byzantine
Being a human being 's a mystery
It's impossible for you or I to see
The individual strings
that bring, our solitary dreams
together, interweaving essence
into a perfectly orchestrated reality
by some cosmic mastery
In reality it's only you and me
You and I, and an unknown
ephemeral deity, our souls scream
out that *Love* is what it's meant to be

The Inscription

By Bekah Wyckoff

How else could I describe passion?
How else could I show myself?
With a scary truth
And a mad vulnerability
With lies and secrets
Whispers to a crowd
Screams to the trees
Crying to a quiet stream
Writing words
Pushing physicality
Breaking toes
Bending the music
To erase my foes
To run from my fears
To create a wonderland
A mad passion that made me take
Everything for my king
And leave behind myself
Can you hear my lips?
Will you listen to my eyes?
Can you walk the roads I did?
Can you dance through the storms
and smile through life as I did?
Listen to my words
Listen.
Imagine my voice
No matter how long I am gone
These words will stay after me.
To help you or heal you,
I do not know
Maybe this is what
Encourages you to glow
But listen dear ones
To Your hearts as they beat
And follow the roads
that you're scared to take.
This is my journey
And yours will be different
Because you are you
You'll meet me among my poems
I'll whisper to you my troubles
I'll tell you what I did next
But listen dear ones to your voice
Because it is worth listening too.

Upcoming Art Shows

The Mat-Su College Art Department invites you to our upcoming events and art celebrations:

October 25-November 10: We are hosting our first Invitational Student Art Show at Radio Free Palmer (550 South Alaska Street, Suite. 201. Palmer, AK). Please also visit Radio Free Palmer on the Second Saturday Palmer Art Walk, November 9, from 3-7 PM.

October 30-November 15: A faculty art show will be held in FSM 200, the college's Art Gallery.

November 20-December 13: Our second Student Art Show is being held in FSM 200. The opening reception is from 5-7 PM on November 20.

Awards, awards, awards!

By Kalia Thao

Why is it that we have awards? Have you checked our hall of fame lately?

Do you even know that we have an awards hall? Oh my goodness! You are missing out on the good stuff! From the Atrium, head towards the cafe. Right before you pass the flags, STOP! You are there! Do you feel the fame?

Awards have been handed to Mat-Su College since early 2009. Marketing and Physical Plant have worked hard to put this hall together. If you're wondering where the awards came from, good! I have some answers for you. To name a few awards, we have received academic awards such as Teacher of the Year and Southern Region EMS Council, Inc. recognition. award. Also, Mat-Su College has been participating in events such as the Colony Days Parade and the Alaska State Fair Parade. With our participation in such events, we've asked students to join us; together all our hard work and efforts paid off with amazing awards.

This summer, I participated in the Alaska State Fair Parade along with other MSC students and the parademics program. We used our attractive Mat-Su College van to play music as we walked down the street, handing out candies and freebies to the crowd. Even more exciting, we had a stretcher with a dummy strolling along with us. With our involvement, we got a 2nd place award!

Does this sound interesting? Do you want to be part of our team during special events? If so, you can add Mat-Su College on Facebook or contact our Marketing & Communications office at 907-746-9317.

You too can participate in evens with Mat-Su College, an award-winning institution!

The Joy of Letting Go

Continued from page 2

helps to make us particularly effective pieces of a large, constantly in flux, undulating machine. In trademark human fashion, the ego's fragility is the source of its flexibility, and we as flexible units, pieces, mechanisms, comprise the flexible organizational system known as culture and all that comes with it. As we know, there are few evolutionary traits quite like adaptability. Nonetheless, the strength of this system comes with a price—do we really need the ego?

When we get out of the shower in the morning and dry ourselves off, we might think that we're naked—but psychologically, we are still very much clothed: clothed in our past, in maintaining "consistency" of identity with those other egos with whom we have bonded and formed mutually beneficial trust pacts (the ego is also helpful with the formation of friendships) in our present, and shaped by what we hope our future to be—built largely upon the desire for approval from other egos, and most of all, self-approval. Assaulted as we are on a daily basis by advertising informing "us" of how we "should" be, lest we lose the approval of the tribe, we, with the exception of the truly outcast, largely obey. It is in this manner that we find ourselves imprisoned—internal conflict over desire, repression, angst, self-loathing, and so many of the plagues rooted in the ego—the imaginary ego imprisons us within its boundaries, boundaries that have been engineered via the socialization process as part of our start-up software for the purpose of effective group functioning, regardless of whatever our true internal desires may be. And here, ladies and gentleman, is the good news: we do not require the ego.

The beauty inherent in the truth of the non-existence of the ego, is that all these things that we, on a daily basis, castigate ourselves for—be it weight, looks, intelligence, wealth—this suffering is self-inflicted. It is the pain caused by our attempts to force ourselves into the boundary, the fence, the prison created for us by the ego. The implication here is that the ego does not control us: we control the ego, and all of these things that we so frequently hear described as "But, that shouldn't be important" actually are, in reality, not important—and what's more, "winning" the ego game is not worth the fight. The ego seduces us by offering victory over imaginary enemies, self-aggrandizement, and glory within the imaginary fantasy realm shared by the tribe at large—but what the ego fails to offer is peace here and now; the best it can do is hint peace may come one day in the future, if you do as it says. We don't even want to play this game. If we can summon the courage to let go of the ego, insecurity will leave with it, and everything will reveal itself to be profoundly beautiful as the birthright of peace, love, and joy is liberated from the jaws of fear and control. If you like what you've read, please show up to We The People meetings at 12:00 pm, Tuesdays, in FSM 201.

Rose-colored choices

By Denise Reeve

My family and friends often tell me "you must be wearing rose-colored glasses." This statement is usually the result of hearing one or more of my optimistic opinions. As a child of "baby-boomer" generation parents, my upbringing was through both lean and prosperous times in history; I remember the gas lines from the 1970s, the excess of the 1980s, and the scarcity of the 1990s, when I was told the perk of the 90's was having a job at all (I had two or three at times). I remember the Cold War (growing up under the threat of nuclear war), the fall of the Berlin Wall, and both Gulf Wars. Through all of these times I have found that choices change your view, choices determine your destiny, and choices are the only real solutions in life.

Perspective is variable. I choose to pick up and don my rose-colored attitude on purpose. Mary Kay Ash, a very wise and successful female entrepreneur, shared "Your attitude determines your altitude." Bill Cantrell, a leadership trainer, offered, "Any day above ground is a good day." These are just two examples of perspective; if either of these people chose pessimism the quotes would be substantially different. Another choice of mine is to look for the good or even the best in the people I interact with. It is easy to find things to dislike and dismiss others, but I find my life is easier when I focus on the nuances that make each person special, kind, or intriguing. My life has been greatly enriched by the friendships this habit brings. To love or hate, respect or not, listen or ignore, and have passion or apathy; each is a choice and each yields different results.

Large and small choices matter—a wise mentor taught me choices are yours to make or ignore. The wisdom he shared inspired me to investigate all choices and choose based on available information. He also showed me poor choices must be accepted, consequences included, but to feel free to learn quickly and choose again to improve the situation. My father lamented throughout my adolescence "you are either a part of the problem or a part of the solution." In his mind situations are everywhere—complaining makes you problematic where offering alternatives and working with others often creates a solution. I have met people who have a bad morning and let it ruin an entire day. I usually choose to have a "bad five minutes," or I try to choose to experience "a bad moment" and move forward. Every new choice changes our unfolding destiny; I want the best possible destiny so I choose wisely.

Choices are the only real solutions in life. When someone speaks to you they choose their words; you choose your reply (and your reaction to their words). Many people have expectations of others—what they should do or could do, essentially attempting to remove or control the other person's choice. That choice hobbles both parties and often creates discord and a poor result. Accepting someone else's choice can create a dialog that seeks understanding and often opens options and choices that result from effective communication; this type of synergy is an optimal path to real solutions. Life happens, choices and actions change (and often enhance) it.

Rev. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" was his choice for optimism in difficult times to take action towards a vision of a better country. Life is a canvas determined by choices of people, perspective, and actions taken. Each choice can greatly vary the outcome of this canvas. I seek rose-colored choices.

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